

From the editor

Gender Studies and Policy Review (GSPR) features both scholarly articles on gender issues and latest reports on gender policy and situations of Korean women. In this issue, we present a collection of papers focusing on the conditions of working women and their relationship to family and reports on work-life balance, gender sensitive budgeting, tax system policies and the current situation of Korean women.

As the rate of Korean women's economic participation increases, more women struggle to balance their job and family. Even though importance of women's economic participation is growing, its result is not uniformly celebratory. In many cases, women's economic activity stabilizes the family's financial situation as well as guarantees their economic independence. In the worst cases, however women's, work is believed to reduce not only time to share with the family, but also chance to stay in the family. Nevertheless, further examination of the relationship between women's employment and family stability is needed taking various socio-economic factors into consideration. The Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Family (hereafter, KLoWF) produced by the Korean Women's Development Institute provides useful data to execute this inquiry and was used in the following three studies.

Yean-Ju Lee examines the impact of women's employment on the incidence of family dissolution in his work, "Roles of Women's Employment in a Divorce Process: An Exploratory Research with the KLoWF Data." Interestingly enough, the author finds out that the status and quality of employment decide the direction of impacts. In other words, women's stable white-collar jobs decrease incidences of divorce or separation while their non-standard jobs increase them. This finding suggests an interesting function of women's earning ability in relationship to family stability. While in the case of economically stable families, women's employment seems to contribute to its solidification, in the opposite cases, it seems to increase the risks to dissolve it.

Divorce is an increasing trend in Korea. Korea's rate of divorce exceeds that of most countries in the world. While the previous paper explores women's employment as a factor contributing to the acceleration of the rise of divorce rate, the work of Hyunjoon Park, Jim Raymo, and Mathew Creighton chooses educational differentials and their trends across generations. They discover the increasing concentration of divorce among women with lower education attainment in the younger generations. Along with the previous study, this study suggests that social strata mediate the divorce trend in Korea.

The other side of the coin is that divorce contributes to the production of female irregular workers. Taek-Myon Lee investigates the factors that lead women to become irregular worker in his study, "Who Becomes Irregular Women Employees? Focusing on Past Job Experiences and Characteristics of Family, Job, and Individual." In terms of marital status, divorced, separated or widowed women turn out to have the highest probability of becoming irregular workers.

Sunju Cho expands our scope of concern to tax system. She identifies the Earned Income Tax Credit as one of the factors that influence women's participation to labor market. In her paper,

“Earned Income Tax Credit and Female Labor Supply: Empirical Analysis and Policy Agenda,” the author examines whether earned income credit can level out feminization of poverty by increasing poor women’s economic participation. She discovers that the expected effect of the policy is realized only under the condition that women are married to a husband with income. Her finding of discriminating implications not only satisfies scholarly interest, but also provides useful data in amelioration of the policy.

Seung-Ah Hong’s report, “Work-Family Balance Policies: From a Comparative Perspective” discusses work and family balance policies of 16 countries including Korea in the context of the specific national conditions and attempts to put forward the best model for Korea. The work-family balance policies include policies on childcare, parental leaves, work hour, and cash/tax benefit system. Hong concludes that the effective work-family balance policies help to increase women’s economic participation and gender equity and even to raise birth rate.

Young-ock Kim continues to discuss the institutionalization process of gender budgeting in Korea following the first volume of GSPR. Her paper, “A Study on the Institutionalization of Gender Budgeting: Drafting a Gender Budget Statement” moves on to the execution of gender budgeting, analyzing the actual cases of gender budgeting. Gender budgeting being an important tool to accomplish gender equality requires further research like this one.

The statistical analysis of Korean women’s current situation by Jaeseon Joo and Chaejung Lee provides us with a useful insight into a relative position of Korean women compared to the international counterparts and the trend in gender relations. Their work helps us to understand multiple facets of the socially debated phenomena such as low fertility rate, increase of international marriages, women’s career discontinuation, and prolongation of life expectancy. It also sheds light on the less known side of Korean society by focusing on social issues like safety and violence.

Young-Taek Kim draws a picture of Korean women with a different aspect, subjective health condition. Subjective health condition has been proven to be an effective indicator to predict illnesses, disability and death. Kim finds out that Korean women’s subjective health condition is much poorer than that of men’s. Moreover, women of a lower socio-economic status have poorer subjective health condition than women on the high end. This study attempts to highlight demographic differences within gender in the health situation of Koreans.

Finally, Jung-Im Hwang introduces the Korean Women’s Development Institute’s research activities in the year 2008 and plan for the years to come. This map of KWDI’s research activities will give the reader an idea what this institute’s goal is and how it strives to accomplish it.

As the reader might have noticed, GSPR strives to accomplish multiple and ambitious goals. As an editor, I would appreciate the reader’s responses to this issue, whether positive or not.